Wean Foundation Supports Building Capacity for Criminal Justice Reform Work

(June 21, 2019, Warren, Ohio) – At its June Board of Directors meeting, The Raymond John Wean Foundation awarded The Ohio Transformation Fund (OTF) a multi-year grant in support of its work to address the impact of mass criminalization and incarceration in Ohio’s communities. OTF efforts include community organizing, policy advocacy and civic engagement programs designed to change the state’s justice system from one of mass jailing, particularly of young people and people of color, to one based on stable families, economic security and access to health care and education.

OTF, its partners and grantees tackle tough issues like bail reform, law enforcement accountability and the school to prison pipeline. Through grants, capacity building and technical assistance, OTF supports the development and empowerment of grassroots organizations representing traditionally impacted individuals and families.

“Our theory of change is that, whereas each of these areas is important and necessary, none on its own can create sustainable, statewide change,” says OTF executive director Judy Wright.

Multiple Ohio-based and national funders, along with the Wean Foundation, understand that maximizing connections and aligning funder dollars is a model stronger than each responding individually to the opportunities and challenges of political and social activism around criminal justice, equity and progressive change.

Supporting the development of local civic engagement, the Wean Foundation awarded additional funding for OTF’s Leadership
NOW: Ohio, an eight-month cross-sector fellowship program for emerging social change leaders developed through a partnership with Rockwood Leadership Institute. Of the 24 state-wide participants that make up the 2019 cohort, a robust representation from the Mahoning Valley includes four Wean Foundation Emerging Leaders Program alumni: Dionne Dowdy, United Returning Citizens (‘18), Keland Logan, The Colony Youngstown (‘17), Miles Johnson, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership (‘16) and Chris Tennant, Thrive Mahoning Valley (‘17).

These changemakers will seek to develop leadership practices that build the long-term civic capacity and fostering the cross-sector relationships necessary to achieve systemic, transformational change in Ohio.

“I look forward to participating in the cohort to expand on what I learned from the Emerging Leaders Program, specifically growing my ability to inspire and align individuals and groups. Participating will challenge me to better manage my relationships and increase personal and organizational effectiveness,” shared Tennant.